



# UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
United States Patent and Trademark Office  
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS  
P.O. Box 1450  
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450  
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/839,697	04/20/2001	John D. Lowrance	SRI1P027	1784

7590 05/23/2006  
MOSER, PATTERSON & SHERIDAN LLP  
595 SHREWSBURY AVENUE  
SUITE 100  
SHREWSBURY, NJ 07702

EXAMINER

MOONEYHAM, JANICE A

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
3629	

DATE MAILED: 05/23/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

<b>Office Action Summary</b>	<b>Application No.</b> 09/839,697	<b>Applicant(s)</b> LOWRANCE ET AL.	
	<b>Examiner</b> Janice A. Mooneyham	<b>Art Unit</b> 3629	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

#### Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

#### Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 04 January 2006 and 06 March 2006.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**.                      2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

#### Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3-20 and 22-40 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3-20 and 22-40 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

#### Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

#### Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All    b) ☐ Some \*    c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

#### Attachment(s)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)  | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)<br>Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)                                   | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)             |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)<br>Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____  |

Art Unit: 3629

### **DETAILED ACTION**

1. This is in response to the applicant's communication filed on January 4, 2006 and March 6, 2006, wherein:

Claims 1, 3-20, and 22-40 are currently pending;

Claims 1, 20, and 39-40 have been amended.

#### ***Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114***

2. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on March 6, 2006 has been entered.

#### ***Response to Amendment***

#### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112***

3. Claims 1, 3-20, and 22-40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the enablement requirement. The claim(s) contains subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to enable one skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and/or use the invention.

Applicant has amended independent claims 1, 20, 39 and 40 to include the essentially the following language (in italics and bolded):

***receiving supporting evidence from said user in response to said one or more of the selected template questions;***

***associating said supporting evidence with said answers to said template questions;***

Generating a new argument having an associated conclusion based on such answers ***and supporting evidence;***

***publishing said new argument including said answers, said supporting evidence and said associated conclusion for review.***

The claim language *associating the supporting evidence said answers and generating a new argument having an associated conclusion based on such answers and supporting evidence* can be interpreted to mean that a user request the supporting evidence and then makes a determination as to which argument to pursue next based on the supporting evidence and the answer to the previous question. The invention would merely organize the questions and any attached evidence to lead the user through the decision process. However, if the computer somehow takes the associated evidence and generates a new argument, the Examiner asserts that this is not described in the specification in such a way as to enable one of ordinary skill to make or use the invention.

### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101***

35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

Art Unit: 3629

4. Claims 1, 3-20 and 22-40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is not supported by either a specific and substantial asserted utility or a well established utility.

The claim language *associating the supporting evidence said answers and generating a new argument having an associated conclusion based on such answers and supporting evidence* can be interpreted to mean that the computer somehow takes the associated evidence and generates a new argument, the Examiner asserts that this is not described in the specification in such a way as to enable one of ordinary skill to make or use the invention.

5. Claims 1, 3-20, 22-40 are also rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph. Specifically, since the claimed invention is not supported by either a specific and substantial asserted utility or a well established utility for the reasons set forth above, one skilled in the art clearly would not know how to use the claimed invention.

### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

6. Claims 1, 3-14, 17-20, 22-33 and 36-40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Calver (2001/0032092) (hereinafter referred to as Calver) in view of Janssen (6,098,062) (hereinafter referred to as Janssen).

Regarding Claim 1:

Calver discloses an analytical system for facilitating decision making given a situation by generating and accessing arguments (arguments are interpreted as being questions based on answers to previous questions) wherein each argument (question) has an associated conclusion as to whether a situation (product or service) will likely have a negative or positive result (information useful in determining whether service providers would (positive) or would not (negative) benefit the customer's business (page 7 [0082]), the analytical system comprising:

a database (Figure 2 (50) and page 11 [0127]) for storing a plurality of templates (Figure 4 (98), forms page 4 [0052], criteria Figure 14 (242)) that each include a plurality of questions which when answered to generate a particular argument (question based on answer) having an associated conclusion (solution/ recommendation) regarding a particular situation (product or service) that is based on answers to its associated template questions (Page 5 [0063] new questions based on previous answers); and

a server ((88) page 4 [0049-0051 and 0053], Figure 5)) comprising means for selecting one of the templates which is most relevant to a particular situation (process is generally driven by one or more questionnaires, each preferably followed by increasingly targeted information to match specific business interest (page 5 [0060]); means for receiving input to one or more of the selected template's questions and means for generating a new argument (question based on answer) having an associated conclusion (solution/recommendation) based on such answers (page 5 [0063] new questions based on previous answers), the associated conclusion indicating

Art Unit: 3629

whether the situation will likely have a positive or negative result (page 7 [0084])informing the customer whether services are beneficial to his or her business (positive); (information useful in determining whether service providers would (positive) or would not (negative) benefit the customer's business (page 7 [0082])).

associating supporting evidence to each answered template question (pages 7-8 [0084])- the customer can be additionally presented with the option to link pages containing product information from the respective providers. Such information may include....).

The applicant is advised that Calver discloses a system with a database and a server. The intended use of the structure is generally given little patentable weight and thus does not distinguish the system from the prior art. An apparatus/system must be distinguished from the prior art in terms of structure rather than function alone (MPEP 2114). The database and server of Calver are fully capable of performing the functions as set forth in the claim language.

While Calver discloses a customer being presented with the option to link pages containing product information from the respective provides [0084], Calver does not explicitly disclose a means for associating said supporting evidence with the answers or generating a new argument having the associated conclusion based on such answers

However, Janssen discloses an invention that provides a means for associating said supporting evidence with the answers or generating a new argument having the associated conclusion based on such answers (*a program and method for facilitating decision-making, and more particularly, the present invention relates to a computer*

Art Unit: 3629

*program, system, and method that accepts inputs that bear on a decision in a structured format from a plurality of sources and arranges the inputs in a hierarchical structure that permits an evaluation of the inputs as they relate to the decision (col. 1, lines 14-20); a system and method that can facilitate decision-making, particularly when the decision-making utilizes for support a large number of sources. It is a further object, to provide a method wherein scientific assessment can be effectively utilized in a decision-making process. The present invention provides a system and method for facilitating a decision-making process comprising a computer program that causes linkage of data representing a plurality of argument structure units into a hierarchical argument structure. Each argument structure unit comprises data corresponding to a hypothesis and its corresponding counter-hypothesis, data corresponding to grounds that provide a basis for inference of the hypothesis or its corresponding counter-hypothesis, data corresponding to a warrant linking the grounds to the hypothesis or its corresponding counter-hypothesis, and data corresponding to backing that certifies the warrant. The hierarchical argument structure comprises a top level argument structure unit and a plurality of subordinate level argument structure units. Each of the plurality of subordinate argument structure units comprises at least a portion of the grounds of the argument structure unit to which it is subordinate. Program code located on each of a plurality of remote computers accepts input from one of a plurality of contributors. Each input comprises data corresponding to an argument structure unit in the hierarchical argument structure and supports the hypothesis or its corresponding counter-hypothesis. A second programming code is adapted to*

*combine the inputs into a single hierarchical argument structure. A third computer program code is responsive to the second computer program code and is adapted to represent a degree of support for the hypothesis and its corresponding counter-hypothesis in the single hierarchical argument structure (col. 6, lines 25-61).*

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to incorporate into the decision support system of Calver the evidence generating taught in Janssen so that arguments being put forth by experts can be effectively captured with the grounds (data with references) upon which conflicting claims of the experts are based and with the claims properly lined to the supporting data so as to aid in making sound policy decision.

Regarding Claim 20 and 39

Calver discloses a method and medium containing program instructions (software module page 9 [0100]) for accessing or generating an argument (questions based on previous answers) having a conclusion (solution) for a particular situation (web-based solutions page 4 [0054], provides products and solutions), the method comprising:

searching a plurality of templates (Figure 4 (98) filling out of forms (page 4 [0052]) /lead generation ( page 5 [0060]) pre-qualifying templates (page 5 [0061], Figure 14 (242) criteria) for a relevant template most related to a particular situation (Figure 12 (214) industry/business/product information), wherein each template includes a plurality of questions (Figure 12 (216) general questions, page 5 [0060] questionnaires); and

Art Unit: 3629

answering one or more questions of the relevant template to form a new argument (question based on answer) having a conclusion (solution (page 4 [0054]) and resulting information (page 7 [0084]) informing customer of services by various providers and whether such services are beneficial to his or her business) based on the one or more answers (page 5 [0062-0062] The Product Configurator dynamically presents the user with new questions based on previous answers); and

associating supporting evidence to each answered template question (pages 7-8 [0084]- the customer can be additionally presented with the option to link pages containing product information from the respective providers. Such information may include....).

While Calver discloses a customer being presented with the option to link pages containing product information from the respective provides [0084], Calver does not explicitly disclose a means for associating said supporting evidence with the answers or generating a new argument having the associated conclusion based on such answers

However, Janssen discloses an invention that provides a means for associating said supporting evidence with the answers or generating a new argument having the associated conclusion based on such answers *(a program and method for facilitating decision-making, and more particularly, the present invention relates to a computer program, system, and method that accepts inputs that bear on a decision in a structured format from a plurality of sources and arranges the inputs in a hierarchical structure that permits an evaluation of the inputs as they relate to the decision (col. 1, lines 14-20); a system and method that can facilitate decision-making, particularly*

*when the decision-making utilizes for support a large number of sources. It is a further object, to provide a method wherein scientific assessment can be effectively utilized in a decision-making process. The present invention provides a system and method for facilitating a decision-making process comprising a computer program that causes linkage of data representing a plurality of argument structure units into a hierarchical argument structure. Each argument structure unit comprises data corresponding to a hypothesis and its corresponding counter-hypothesis, data corresponding to grounds that provide a basis for inference of the hypothesis or its corresponding counter-hypothesis, data corresponding to a warrant linking the grounds to the hypothesis or its corresponding counter-hypothesis, and data corresponding to backing that certifies the warrant. The hierarchical argument structure comprises a top level argument structure unit and a plurality of subordinate level argument structure units. Each of the plurality of subordinate argument structure units comprises at least a portion of the grounds of the argument structure unit to which it is subordinate. Program code located on each of a plurality of remote computers accepts input from one of a plurality of contributors. Each input comprises data corresponding to an argument structure unit in the hierarchical argument structure and supports the hypothesis or its corresponding counter-hypothesis. A second programming code is adapted to combine the inputs into a single hierarchical argument structure. A third computer program code is responsive to the second computer program code and is adapted to represent a degree of support for the hypothesis and its*

Art Unit: 3629

*corresponding counter-hypothesis in the single hierarchical argument structure (col. 6, lines 25-61).*

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to incorporate into decision support method and medium of Calver the evidence generating taught in Janssen so that arguments being put forth by experts can be effectively captured with the grounds (data with references) upon which conflicting claims of the experts are based and with the claims properly lined to the supporting data so as to aid in making sound policy decision.

Regarding Claims 4 and 22:

Calver discloses a method and system further comprising associating a rationale to each answered template question (pages 7 [0074] industry specific information and resources).

Regarding Claims 3 and 23

Calver discloses a method and system wherein each template's questions are formed in a hierarchical structure, wherein a parent question that has a plurality of children questions may be automatically answered by answering the parent's children (The Product Configurator page 5 [0063] –contents of the Product Configurator can be modular, based on responses of the user to previous questions (parent). The Product Configurator dynamically presents the user with new questions (child) based on previous answers (parent)).

Regarding Claims 5 and 24:

Calver discloses a method and system wherein input to one or more of the selected template's questions may be received from a plurality of users over a computer network (page 5 [0059] multiple user interactive sections, Figure 5).

Regarding Claims 6 and 25:

Calver discloses a method and system further comprising allowing one or more of the users to associate comments (recommendations) to at least a portion of the new argument (solution/product (Figure 8 (135-143), page 9 [0098] product and related recommendation).

Regarding Claims 7 and 26:

Calver discloses a method and system wherein the comments are only accessible by one or more specified users (Figure 8 9135-1430 and page 9 [0098]).

Regarding Claims 8 and 27:

Calver discloses a method and system wherein each template question is a multiple choice question (page 7 [0081] a graphically displayed drop down list or an actual number that is compared against *a list or ranges may be graphically displayed* (multiple choice) for the user, page 7 [0082] credit data can be entered by a graphically displayed check list (multiple choice), test entry box or drop down list (multiple choice).

Art Unit: 3629

Regarding Claims 9-10 and 28-29:

Calver does not disclose a method and system wherein each multiple choice question asks to what degree of likelihood will a particular factor related to the particular situation have a positive or negative result or wherein each multiple choice question has a categorical scale of likelihood represented by a set of answers that partition the likelihood scale

However, it is old and well known to ask provide preferences or degrees of likelihood in the form of multiple choice questions, such as, I agree, I agree somewhat, I disagree, I strongly disagree, It is unlikely, It is probable.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to include multiple choice questions which ask to what degree of likelihood with a categorical scale of the likelihood that a particular factor related to a situation would have a positive or negative result since a skilled artisan would have recognized that this practice identifies more specifically what product or service would or would not be most beneficial to a customer's business, best suit the customer's needs and provide the greatest interest and utility to the user.

Regarding Claim 11 and 30:

Calver discloses a method and system wherein each template's questions are formed in a hierarchical structure, wherein a parent question that has a plurality of children questions may be automatically answered by answering the parent's children (The Product Configurator page 5 [0063] –contents of the Product Configurator can be

Art Unit: 3629

modular, based on responses of the user to previous questions (parent). The Product Configurator dynamically presents the user with new questions (child) based on previous answers (parent))

Regarding Claims 12 and 31:

Calver discloses a method further comprising providing more than one answer for at least one question (Figure 10 (184-192), page 5 [0057] for the customer the system may provide access to multiple products through one point of contact; allows customers to answer basic questions about products and services)

Regarding Claims 13 and 32:

Calver discloses a method wherein the parent question is automatically answered using a answering technique selected by a user (portal functionality (multiple user interaction sections; page 6 [0069] – while viewing the web based portal homepage, the user may be faced with the option of directly filling out a Pre-Qualified Template questionnaire; page 6 [0070] Product Oriented – if the product orientation format is selected.... Figure 6 and descriptions on page 6 [0068])

Regarding Claims 14 and 33:

Calver discloses a method and system wherein the answering technique *may be* selected from a group consisting of a maximization technique, an averaging technique, and a minimization technique (maximization techniques - Figure 13 (236) Management

Art Unit: 3629

Best Practices- Documentation regarding best practices in small businesses; page 12 {0133} .

Regarding Claims 17 and 36:

Calver discloses a method and system wherein one or more template questions have an associated discovery tool that facilitates answering of such associated template question (pages 7-8 [0084]- the customer can be additionally presented with the option to link pages containing product information from the respective providers. Such information may include, for example, case studies, testimonials, descriptions....and so forth.).

Regarding Claims 18 and 37:

Calver discloses a method and system wherein each template is associated with a situation descriptors (page 10 [0107] range of categories), the method and system further comprising selecting one of the templates which is most relevant to a particular situation by comparing a current situation to the situation descriptors associated with the templates to thereby find the most relevant templates having the most closely matching situation descriptors (page 10 [0107] applicant interested in Loans category will find products and services offered by financial providers, Credit category will offer products and services offered by credit providers).

Regarding Claims 19 and 38:

Calver discloses a method and system further comprising creating a new template, wherein the new template is created by an expert (.page 11 [0127] business rules – method and system make decisions and solves problems by using knowledge and rules defined by experts, ie business rules).

Regarding Claims 40:

Calver discloses a computer system operable to access or generate an argument (question based on answer) having a conclusion (solution/recommendation) for a particular situation (product or service), the computer system comprising:

one or more processors (Figure 2(31), page 3 [0040-0041]);

one or more memory (Figure 2 (50)) wherein at least one of the processors and memory are adapted to:

search a plurality of templates for a relevant template most related to a particular situation, wherein each template includes a plurality of questions (Figure 16); and

receive answer one or more questions of the relevant template to form a new argument having a conclusion based on the one or more answers (new questions based on previous answers, page 5[0063]); and

associating supporting evidence to each answered template question (pages 7-8 [0084]- the customer can be additionally presented with the option to link pages

Art Unit: 3629

containing product information from the respective providers. Such information may include....).

The applicant is advised that Calver discloses a system with processors and memory. The language "adapted for" is generally given little patentable weight in an apparatus/system and thus does not distinguish the system from the prior art. An apparatus/system must be distinguished from the prior art in terms of structure rather than function alone (MPEP 2114). The database and server of Calver are fully capable of performing the functions as set forth in the claim language.

While Calver discloses a customer being presented with the option to link pages containing product information from the respective providers [0084], Calver does not explicitly disclose a means for associating said supporting evidence with the answers or generating a new argument having the associated conclusion based on such answers

However, Janssen discloses an invention that provides a means for associating said supporting evidence with the answers or generating a new argument having the associated conclusion based on such answers. *(a program and method for facilitating decision-making, and more particularly, the present invention relates to a computer program, system, and method that accepts inputs that bear on a decision in a structured format from a plurality of sources and arranges the inputs in a hierarchical structure that permits an evaluation of the inputs as they relate to the decision (col. 1, lines 14-20); a system and method that can facilitate decision-making, particularly when the decision-making utilizes for support a large number of sources. It is a further object, to provide a method wherein scientific assessment can be effectively utilized in*

Art Unit: 3629

*a decision-making process. The present invention provides a system and method for facilitating a decision-making process comprising a computer program that causes linkage of data representing a plurality of argument structure units into a hierarchical argument structure. Each argument structure unit comprises data corresponding to a hypothesis and its corresponding counter-hypothesis, data corresponding to grounds that provide a basis for inference of the hypothesis or its corresponding counter-hypothesis, data corresponding to a warrant linking the grounds to the hypothesis or its corresponding counter-hypothesis, and data corresponding to backing that certifies the warrant. The hierarchical argument structure comprises a top level argument structure unit and a plurality of subordinate level argument structure units. Each of the plurality of subordinate argument structure units comprises at least a portion of the grounds of the argument structure unit to which it is subordinate. Program code located on each of a plurality of remote computers accepts input from one of a plurality of contributors. Each input comprises data corresponding to an argument structure unit in the hierarchical argument structure and supports the hypothesis or its corresponding counter-hypothesis. A second programming code is adapted to combine the inputs into a single hierarchical argument structure. A third computer program code is responsive to the second computer program code and is adapted to represent a degree of support for the hypothesis and its corresponding counter-hypothesis in the single hierarchical argument structure (col. 6, lines 25-61).*

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to incorporate into decision support system of Calver the evidence generating taught in Janssen so that arguments being put forth by experts can be effectively captured with the grounds (data with references) upon which conflicting claims of the experts are based and with the claims properly lined to the supporting data so as to aid in making sound policy decision.

7. Claims 15-16 and 34-35 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Calver and Janssen as applied to claims 1 and 20 above, and further in view of Grosser.

Regarding Claims 15 and 34:

Neither Calver nor Janssen disclose a method wherein each answer within the hierarchical structure has a color selected from a subset of colors, each color representing a different answer so that the hierarchical structure's colors convey a line of reasoning.

However, Grosser discloses highlighting the most important sub-decisions (*The computer-aided decision-making system and methods employ a rules-based analysis engine having a plurality of rules for selecting, scoring and ranking a plurality of subchoices. A user interface accepts user-provider information, promotions, and responses to system inquiries for generating reports, proposals and feedback. The invention provides immediate, useful, and relevant information to a person in a decision-*

Art Unit: 3629

*making context, overcoming common human cognitive problems that occur in decision-making making, and enabling consumer purchases in an on-line sales environment. In particular, aspects of the invention that aid a person in decision-making include, but are not limited to: managing all the sub-decisions, educating the decision-maker, **highlighting the most important sub-decisions**, offering the most viable proposals for evaluation, distinguishing significant differences between proposals, supplying various evaluation tools, preventing blind spots, assisting the decision-maker's memory, gauging the progress of the decision process, and learning about the decision maker from the decision process (col. 1, line 61 thru col. 2, line 13).*

It would have been obvious to incorporate into the decision support system and method of Calver and Janssen the ability to highlight sub-decisions as taught in Grosser so that the "more preferable" proposals can be quickly identified.

Regarding Claims 16 and 35:

Calver discloses a method and system wherein one or more template questions is associated with a second hierarchical structure of questions and the first and second hierarchical structures together form a set of cascaded arguments (questions) (page 5 [0063] questions based upon answers to above questions).

***Response to Arguments***

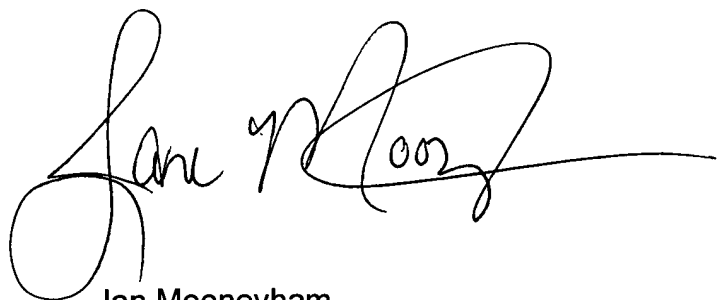
8. Applicant's arguments with respect to claim 1, 3-20 and 22-40 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection. The arguments are directed to the newly amended claim language.

Art Unit: 3629

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Janice A. Mooneyham whose telephone number is (571) 272-6805. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday through Thursday.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, John Weiss can be reached on (571) 272-6812. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jan Mooneyham", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jan Mooneyham  
Patent Examiner  
Art Unit 3629